



**SOUTH COUNTY REGIONAL
WASTEWATER AUTHORITY**

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RECEIVED

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**CITY OF SAN JOSE
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES**

June 7, 2007

City of San Jose
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ATTN: Darryl Boyd

SUBJECT: COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT EIR FOR THE COYOTE VALLEY
SPECIFIC PLAN PROJECT FOR THE CITY OF SAN JOSE, DATED
MARCH 2007

The South County Regional Wastewater Authority (SCRWA) is a California joint powers agency which owns and manages municipal wastewater facilities, including reclamation, for the Cities of Gilroy and Morgan Hill. SCRWA operates a wastewater treatment, disposal, and water recycling facility. Selected portions of the above-referenced Draft EIR have been reviewed by the SCRWA staff and technical consultants and we offer the following comments related to water supply systems and impacts.

The comments are by Sections 4.8, 4.11, 4.16 and Appendices J, L, and M of the Draft EIR.

The Coyote Valley Specific Plan (CVSP) EIR proposes that a significant part of the water supply for the development in the Coyote Valley will consist of recycled water, to be used for irrigation, groundwater recharge, or to maintain the water level in a new lake (Coyote Lake). In Section 4.11.2.3, an agency called the "South County Water Recycling Agency" (presumably SCRWA) is identified as a potential supplier of recycled water. However, the idea of using South County recycled water seems to be a late-stage addition to the EIR intended to show that water supply impacts will not be significant. The lack of prior coordination with SCRWA before the idea was published in the EIR indicates that it should not really be considered to be a component on the project, which detracts from the credibility of related impact assessments.

Plans for distribution of SCRWA recycled water are proceeding in accordance with the Recycled Water Master Plan which does not include export of water to the Coyote Valley. Extension of the distribution to CVSP would require approval of a Master Plan amendment by the City Councils of Morgan Hill and Gilroy as well as by the Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD). While SCRWA strongly supports the expansion of recycled water use, a Master Plan amendment would not be considered without addressing relevant issues, including the following.

Recycled Water Supply and Demand

The project description should state that only recycled water in excess of South County recycled water demands would be available for use and should further recognize that water would be available in winter more than in summer. Existing recycled water customers and local needs would be expected to take priority over the exporting of recycled water out of the Llagas groundwater basin. The EIR should consider existing recycled water delivery contracts and commitments along with total plant capacity and current flows.

Llagas Groundwater Basin Impacts

Pumping SCRWA recycled water to the CVSP would transfer water from the southerly-flowing Llagas groundwater basin to the northerly-flowing Coyote and Santa Clara basins, which will reduce the groundwater resource available to the south. The EIR needs to consider the potential impacts of this interbasin water transfer on the water resources in the Llagas groundwater basin and the Pajaro Valley, including changes in both water levels and quality. Removal of a substantial volume of water will change the overall water balance in the Llagas basin, which may reduce groundwater available for pumping to meet local agricultural or potable demands as well as groundwater flows that may recharge the Bolsa Groundwater Subbasin or the Pajaro Valley. Lower groundwater elevations may increase power required for pumping or contribute to land subsidence. Exporting of recycled water may affect concentrations of inorganic salts, nitrate, or other groundwater constituents.

Required Facility Upgrades

The SCRWA recycled water system has limitations on capacity that would limit delivery of water in the near term (i.e. the next five years). Delivery to the CVSP area would require new distribution facilities (e.g. pipelines, pump stations). Reservoirs may be needed to balance peak and average demands. If these facilities are required for the CVSP development, they need to be planned and paid for as part of this project. An adequate environmental impact analysis cannot be done without a clear and complete description of the project.

Reverse Osmosis Reject Water Impacts

The EIR states that all the recycled water used for the CVSP will first be treated in an “advanced recycle water treatment plant (ARWTP), which will include reverse osmosis (RO). The EIR should explain clearly that RO does not simply eliminate salt; it separates the incoming feed wastewater into a clean water product stream and a reject, brackish water or “brine” stream consisting of a portion of the water and most of the unwanted constituents (primarily inorganic salts) that were in the original feed. To this end, Section 4.11.2.3 notes that a “loss” of 30

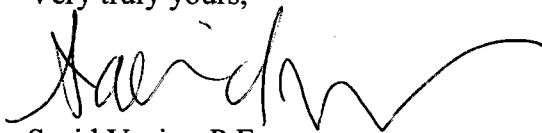
percent of the 14,700 afy incoming recycled water supply will occur as a result of the advanced wastewater treatment process. Figure 4.11-1 diagrams this 30 percent loss (the RO reject stream) as a box receiving 4,400 afy of flow. The EIR needs to state clearly where the RO reject water goes from this box, and properly evaluate the impacts.

The RO reject cannot be discharged to Coyote Lake, surface waters, or storm drains, nor can it be used for irrigation or allowed to percolate. Reject water flow is not included in wastewater flow estimates presented in section 4.11.2.2 and is not considered in the evaluation of impacts on the San Jose / Santa Clara Water Pollution Control Plant (SJ/SC WPCP). In section 4.11.4, Impact Util-2 states that there will be no impact on SJ/SC WPCP. On the other hand, Section 4.16.2.3 states that consideration is being given to discharge the reject through the SJ/SC WPCP. On page 426, the EIR points out that the salt in the reject might be considered beneficial if discharged to the salt-deficient southern end of San Francisco Bay. However, if 4,400 afy of RO reject derived from treatment of 14,700 afy of recycled water is mixed with the wastewater entering the SJ/SC WPCP, a mass-balance calculation will show that an 8% to 10% increase in the salt concentration in the South Bay Water Recycling Project (SBWRP) recycled water will occur, which would be unacceptable to the other users of the system.

The EIR fails to identify an acceptable (feasible) disposal mechanism for RO reject, without which the alternative of "breaking the percolation prohibition constraint" (Appendix J, page 3-14) may be selected instead. Of more concern to SCRWA would be a proposal to send the RO reject south. Because SCRWA disposes of treated wastewater by percolation, it would not be acceptable if the ARWTP were to draw feed water from SCRWA and discharge the reject back to SCRWA.

Accordingly, the SCRWA requests that, in its final EIR, the City adequately and completely address the issues raised herein. We appreciate the opportunity to review this Draft EIR, and wish to receive any subsequent documents. Please add us to the list of addresses for all correspondence.

Very truly yours,



Saeid Vaziry, P.E.
Chief Engineer

cc: Jim Ashcraft, City of Morgan Hill
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